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Mochmann, Ingvill C.; Lee, Sabine; Stelzl-Marx, Barbara

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The Children of the Occupations Born During the Second World War and Beyond – An Overview

*Ingvill C. Mochmann, Sabine Lee & Barbara Stelzl-Marx**

Abstract: »Kinder der Besatzung: Zweiter Weltkrieg und andere Konflikte – ein Überblick«. This paper will give an overview of one facet of the large research field of children born of war, namely children fathered by foreign soldiers and local mothers in different European countries during and after the Second World War. During this particular conflict, millions of soldiers of different nationalities were stationed in different countries – world wide – often for a considerable amount of time either in preparation of warfare (e.g. Americans and Canadians soldiers in Britain), during military operations in the enemy country (Germans soldiers in Eastern Europe, France, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Greece etc.) or after the defeated countries' surrenders (e.g. American, Soviet, French and British soldiers in Germany and Austria). In a second step, we will discuss how knowledge obtained through the analysis of children born of WWII may contribute to our understanding of specific problems of children born of war generally, and in recent and present day conflicts in particular. Finally, we will introduce some methodological considerations of relevance for the research field of children born of war across time and nations and define issues for future research agendas.

Keywords: Children born of war, Second World War, occupation, war, rape, genocide, hidden population, soldiers.

1. Introduction

Recent conflicts such as those in Bosnia and Rwanda, where sexual violence against women was used as an instrument of warfare, have raised public awareness of the complex war-time interactions between local women and foreign soldiers. While the topic has only recently surfaced as an area of political interest, the phenomenon is not new. Every war sees relations between local women and foreign soldiers and children born as a result of such contacts between them. The soldier might be seen as an enemy or ally. Often, children fathered by foreign or enemy soldiers become victims of social harassment.

* Address all communications to: Ingvill C. Mochmann, GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Bachemer Str. 40, 50931 Köln, Germany; e-mail: ingvill.mochmann@gesis.org, <http://www.gesis.org>, <http://www.childrenbornofwar.org>. Sabine Lee, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, United Kingdom; e-mail: s.lee@bham.ac.uk. Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Ludwig Boltzmann-Institut für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung, Schörgelgasse 43, 8010 Graz, Austria; e-mail: barbara.stelzl-marx@bik.ac.at, www.bik.ac.at.

Often they fail to receive the social benefits available for other children of single parents. They are often socially stigmatized and denied most elementary education and social security. More fundamentally, they often suffer from identity crises, as many do not know their fathers and, in some cases, not even their mothers. Children have been born as a result of relationships ranging from mutual consent to organised rape. So far this topic has found little interest in academic research, but in the following paper we will give an overview of some of the research undertaken so far. Information exists in particular about children born of war during and after WWII information, even if it is still rather sketchy. Nevertheless, some patterns can be identified which hold for this particular group of children born of war. What is more, some of these patterns are also evident in children born of war in more recent and present day conflicts. Below, findings of work researching children born of WWII will be presented and put into the context of some studies of more recent conflicts, methodological challenges of this research field will be discussed and issues for future research defined.

2. Children Born of Occupation during and after Second World War 1940 until 1955

Among the children of foreign soldiers and local mothers, the sub-group for which the largest amount of reliable data exists is the group of Norwegian, Danish and to some extent French children fathered by German *Wehrmacht* soldiers during World War II. Particularly in the case of Norway data and information on the estimated 10.000 to 12.000 children fathered by German soldiers and their life courses are available. A research project was funded by the Norwegian research council to analyse different aspects of the lives of children fathered by German soldiers in Norway during WWII. Analyses of register data show these children have poorer health, higher suicide rates, less education and income than other Norwegians from the same age cohort.¹ Official documentations offer some evidence as to how the children were viewed and treated by both the Government and other public organisations after the war. Often the children – due to their provenance – were considered enemies who could become a threat to Norway in future. Children were taken away from their mothers, laws were adopted to exclude these children from child benefits; mothers who had married Germans lost their Norwegian citizenship; and the Government offered the children to an Australian delegation looking for labour force. Qualitative interviews indicate that many of the children were

¹ Dag Ellingsen, En registerbasert undersøkelse, Statistics Norway, Rapport Nr. 2004/19, 2004.

exposed to discrimination and stigmatisation both in family and community.² A survey among more than 1000 Norwegian and Danish children fathered by German soldiers was carried out by an international research team between 1997 and 2003. One of the advantages of such a comparative survey is that it facilitates the analysis of how children born of war are treated in different cultural and military contexts. Although the sample is not representative, the information provided by this survey draws upon a broader data base than usually available in the analysis of this particular group. The comparative analysis of Denmark and Norway has led to interesting findings for the two countries individually and to interesting insights into significant differences of the children's experiences in both countries. An analysis comparing health problems and experiences in childhood among the children fathered by German soldiers and Norwegian or Danish women during the occupation indicate the Norwegian children were exposed to exclusion, harassment and medical problems more frequently than the Danish ones.³ Although these results indicate that life has been easier for the estimated 6000-8000 Danish children born of war, the case study of Denmark by Mochmann and Øland in this volume shows that questions relating to identity and knowing the biological origin have nonetheless been of great importance to the Danish children fathered by German soldiers. Many grew up in an environment where knowledge of their biological background was withheld from them. The mother and other family members set up a network of lies and secrecy about the child's origin, and the topic became a taboo. Often the child learned about his/her background at school or from neighbours, and others learned about their fathers as adults by coincidence. The impact this has had on many lives is clearly emphasised by the feelings and thoughts expressed by the respondents of the questionnaire survey in the open-ended questions.

Jean-Paul Picaper and Ludwig Norz, in their book *Enfants Maudits*,⁴ opened up a wide debate about the children of German occupation soldiers in France. Through journalistic rather than primarily academic in their approach, Norz and Picaper shed light on one of the last taboos of WWII in France, the *enfants*

² Kåre Olsen, *Krigens barn: De norske krigsbarna og deres mødre*. Oslo, Aschehoug, 1998, Lars Borgersrud, *Staten og krigsbarna: En historisk undersøkelse av statsmyndighetenes behandling av krigsbarna i de første etterkrigsårene*, University of Oslo, Department of culture studies, 2004. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, Eva, eds. *Children of World War II. The hidden enemy legacy* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005).

³ Ingvill C Mochmann, and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, „Kriegskinder in Europa“, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Nr. 18-19/2005: 34-38. Ingvill C. Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, „The forgotten consequences of war: The life course of children fathered by German soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – some empirical results,“ *Historical Social Research*, 33(1) (2008): 347-363. See also Ingvill C. Mochmann und Arne Øland, „Der lange Schatten des Zweiten Weltkriegs: Kinder deutscher Wehrmachtsoldaten und einheimischer Frauen in Dänemark“ in this volume.

⁴ Jean-Paul Picaper and Ludwig Norz, *Enfants maudits* (Paris: Des Syrtes Edt., 2004).

maudits, French children fathered by German soldiers during the occupation. The book, based on interviews with those children of the occupation, demonstrates how they were treated as pariah by the local communities and rejected by their own families. The condemnation of their mother's 'horizontal collaboration with the enemy' was transferred onto the children, an estimated 200.000 according to Norz and Picaper. Apart from the shame they allegedly brought to their family and the resulting discrimination suffered by many, the overriding impression left by many children of the occupation is the identity crisis experiences because they never knew or met their fathers. This is a recurring theme that has been described by many children born of war across times and nations. The *Enfants Maudits* were taken up as an academic research topic by Fabrice Virgili, who after his earlier study of the women who had been punished as horizontal collaborators⁵ has recently published the first detailed academic study of the children of the enemy in France.⁶ While there is little evidence of any systematic ostracisation on the part of the French authorities, many of Virgili's findings confirm the general impression already obtained in studies of other children born of war, namely the prevalence of stigmatization, the rejection by the children's mothers and families, the non-acceptance on the part of the local communities, leaving the children with a feeling that 'their crime was being born'.

Other countries, too, have been the subject of some preliminary studies. Information from and about children fathered by German soldiers in other occupied territories such as the Netherlands, Belgium, the Soviet Union, Greece, Italy etc. indicate that the children were exposed to discrimination, stigmatisation and violence due to the fact that their fathers belonged to the enemy. In countries such as the Soviet Union and other eastern European states relationships between German soldiers and local women were prohibited by the Nazi government for racial reasons. A relationship could be a danger for both parents and the child could be exposed to infanticide. The stories of the children born of these relationships remain largely untold.⁷

⁵ Fabrice Virgili, *La France virile: Des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris: Payot, 2000).

⁶ Fabrice Virgili, *Naître ennemi: Les enfants de couples franco-allemands nés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Payot, 2009).

⁷ Gabriele Czarnowski, "Zwischen Germanisierung und Vernichtung: Verbotene Polnisch-deutsche Liebesbeziehungen und die Re-Konstruktion des Volkskörpers im Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Die Gegenwart der NS-Vergangenheit*, ed. by Helgard Kramer, (Berlin: Philo, 2000), 295-303. Birthe Kundrus, "Nur die halbe Geschichte. Frauen im Umfeld der Wehrmacht zwischen 1939 und 1945 – ein Forschungsbericht", in *Die Wehrmacht. Mythos und Realität*, ed. by Rolf-Dieter Müller und Erich Volkmann (München: Oldenbourg, 1999), 719-735. Regina Mühlhäuser, "Between Extermination and Germanization: Children of German Men in the 'Occupied Eastern Territories', 1942-1945," in *Children of World War II – The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, ed. by Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005), 167-189.

For some of these countries little is known and in many cases research has only recently started. Preliminary findings indicate many similarities to the cases of Norway, Denmark and France, however. Monika Diederich's case study in this volume⁸ establishes a clear link between the stigmatization experienced by Dutch women who had relationships with German soldiers and the discrimination against the 12.000 to 15.000 children born of these liaisons. Furthermore, her study confirms that the mothers often chose to hide the identity of their fathers from their environment and from the children themselves, and as a result many Dutch children of *Wehrmachtssoldaten* only learnt about their biological origins in adulthood. The psychological effects of the identity crises suffered by many of those children are similar to the experiences known from the Norwegian and Danish analyses.

As in the other European countries occupied by the German *Wehrmacht*, Belgium was home to many children fathered by German soldiers during the country's war-time occupation. Conservative estimates put the figure at approximately 20,000 children. Belgium's division into three distinct areas, Flanders, Walloon and the German-speaking territory, resulted in German policies vis-à-vis the local population showing distinct variations, which also affected the way local women who had relationships with German soldiers were viewed – and by implication also the way their children, fathered by *Wehrmacht* soldiers were received locally. In German-speaking areas, German matrimonial laws were applied. In Flanders women were generally considered Aryan by the German authorities and therefore contact between Germans and Flemish women was encouraged. Furthermore, mothers of children born of *Wehrmacht* soldiers (and subsequently their children, too) were supported, no least through the Lebensborn e.V. This organisation operated a Lebensbornhaus "Ardennen" there. In contrast, Walloon women (and by implication children born of Walloon mothers) were considered racially inferior and were thus not supported in the same way.⁹ No systematic research has been carried out on the history of the children of war and occupation in Belgium, but the Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (CEGESOMA) in Brussels is encouraging such research through a call for children born of war to come forward for further research through interviews.¹⁰

Interesting is also the case of Greece. Kerstin Muth¹¹ estimates the number of children born to Greek women and fathered by German soldiers during the occupation of Greece to be about 100 which is small compared to the other

⁸ See Monika Diederichs, "'Moffenkinder': Kinder der Besatzung in den Niederlanden" in this volume.

⁹ Georg Lilienthal, *Der "Lebensborn e.V.". Ein Instrument nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2003), 33, 186.

¹⁰ <http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/rech_encours_en.php?article=734&pagnbr=14&pagofs=0>.

¹¹ Kerstin Muth, *Die Wehrmacht in Griechenland – und ihre Kinder* (Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag, 2008).

occupied countries. As abortions were easily accessible in Greece at that time it is likely, Muth argues, that only a small proportion of pregnancies resulted in births.¹² As in the other countries, in Greece this part of war history remains a taboo both in family and society. How difficult it is to break such a taboo is demonstrated by the fact that even after five newspaper articles and one television film in 2006 only two children contacted her. Muth's research was based on six studies, and the experiences of these six children of *Wehrmachtssoldaten* confirm what we have seen in other countries. The children often grew up with secrecy surrounding their biological origin; they often lived in poverty with stigmatisation of being born out of wedlock in addition to being a "German bastard". Muth argues that although the family constellations of the persons she interviewed differed, all seem psychologically damaged due to the discriminations they had experienced.

Just as German soldiers occupied substantial parts of Europe during the war itself in Germany's quest for territorial domination, Allied forces were stationed in many areas in preparation of their own deployment (e.g. American and Canadian forces in Britain before D-Day; Canadian forces in the Netherlands after the liberation of the Netherlands), during the war (e.g. Allied forces in formerly Nazi-held territories as part of liberation manoeuvres) and after the war (Allied occupation forces in Germany and Austria) in an attempt to safeguard the territorial and geopolitical post-war settlement in central Europe. In all these cases local women engaged in relationships with foreign soldiers, and as a result tens of thousands of children were born. Relationships reached from consensual love affairs at one end of the spectrum via practical "service arrangements" to sexual violence at the other end of the spectrum.

Barbara Stelzl-Marx's case study¹³ primarily investigates the children born of Soviet soldiers and local women in Austria and Germany. In spite of clear guidance instructing the soldiers to behave correctly vis-à-vis the local population and abstain from acts of revenge, there was a relatively high rate of rapes in territories occupied by the Red Army. But despite the common perception of the interaction between Soviet soldiers and local civilians being dominated by violence, there were also large numbers of voluntary relationships and love affairs. The situation of children born of Soviet fathers, therefore, resembled those of many other children born of war. Frequently, their biological origin was kept a secret. The topic of the Soviet father was a taboo; the children grew up believing the stepfather was the biological father; mothers did not want to tell their children anything; hardly any evidence leading to the identity of the biological fathers was preserved or could be found later. Given the deteriorating relationship between Soviet Union and Western Power and the subsequent

¹² Muth, 2008, 81.

¹³ See Barbara Stelzl-Marx, „Die unsichtbare Generation. Kinder sowjetischer Besatzungssoldaten in Österreich und Deutschland“ in this volume.

alienation of Soviet Union and parts of the occupied countries, it is not surprising to see that the stigmatization of the children of Soviet soldiers was, if anything, more pronounced than that of other children of the occupation. Added to the political alienation between the Soviet Union and Germany/Austria was the racial component; this combination resulted in an environment where discrimination against the mothers and children was rife.

Although the relationship between occupiers and occupied was somewhat more friendly in the case of American and Canadian forces occupying parts of Europe during and after the war, and even more so in the case of these forces being stationed in Britain in preparation for D-Day, the children born as a result of liaisons between Canadian and American soldiers and local German, British or Dutch women experienced hostility and often grew up knowing little about their biological origins. Sabine Lee's case study¹⁴ compares the fate of British and German children fathered by American GIs. This comparison brought to light some differences and also stark similarities in the situation of these distinct groups. Legally, it was significantly easier for British women whose children had been fathered by (white) GIs to get permission to marry and eventually follow the husband to the United States. However, the majority of young mothers still stayed in Britain either raising their children as single mothers, within their own family, giving them up for adoption or having them raised in foster or institutional care. In Germany, where non-fraternization regulations forbade marriages until the end of 1946, marriages were much less common overall, and in the vast majority of cases children were raised in the mothers' families. In both countries it was common for the children to grow up in ignorance of their biological origins, and often they only found out about the identity of their fathers well into their adulthood, if at all. This frequently led the children to experience psychological and psychosomatic problems in adolescence and adulthood. The situation of mixed-race children of the occupation, generally children of Afro-American soldiers – was even more difficult. They were subjected to the same kind of discrimination and stigmatisation that affected other 'children of the occupation', as illegitimate children of mothers, who had had relationships with foreign soldiers. Their situation was made more acute by the fact that they were visibly different and could not hide or be hidden. This heightened public awareness, and they were perceived as a 'problem that had to be dealt with' by German and British authorities. Similarly, they were regarded as a problem by Americans, both those living in the US and those residing in Germany and Britain. These countries saw lengthy political debates about the fate of the children. In Germany, three incompatible views of how to deal with the so-called 'Brown Babies' emerged: children should remain in Germany, raised by German families or in orphanages and socialised

¹⁴ See Sabine Lee, „Kinder amerikanischer Soldaten in Europa: ein Vergleich der Situation britischer und deutscher Kinder“ in this volume.

with other (white) children; children should be segregated into group homes in Germany and educated in preparation for eventual adoption; or children should be adopted by (Afro-) American parents in America. All three views were pursued and put into practice with varying degree of success as far as the socialisation of the children was concerned.

While we are beginning to gain an understanding of the life courses of children born of war and occupation during the Second World War in some areas, and while first attempts at comparisons between the fate of children born in different geographical and geo-political contexts during and after this particular war have been made, there remain significant gaps in the research of other areas of which we know that the phenomenon of children born of war was equally prevalent. Italy, Jersey, many central and Eastern European countries stand out among these under researched areas,¹⁵ as do children born of WWII in other continents such as the estimated 200.000 Korean women who were used as Comfort women by the Japanese army during WWII and children born as a result of these relationships.¹⁶ It is hoped that research will be extended to those areas to allow a more complete picture to emerge.

3. Children Born of War Beyond the Second World War II

Children Born of War and Occupation, children fathered by foreign soldiers and born to local women are a phenomenon as old as war itself and will continue as long as wars and conflicts take place. Since World War II there have been numerous such conflicts, and children have been born of foreign soldiers such as children American soldiers and Vietnamese women during the Vietnam war, children of Pakistani soldiers and Bengali women during the civil war in Bangladesh, children of Indonesian soldiers and local women in East Timor to name but a few. Recent conflicts such as the wars in Rwanda and Northern Uganda, in former Yugoslavia, or the conflicts in East Timor, Sierra Leone or Congo have raised the awareness of war-related sexual violence against women and the fate of children born as a result of forced or voluntary relationships between foreign soldiers and local women. This heightened awareness is the result of a multitude of factors. Increased media coverage of military conflicts globally, including investigative journalism dealing with the social impact of such conflicts, has made war and their repercussions more visible across the world. As important for the greater visibility is the fact that the nature of warfare has changed significantly. Not only are civilians often perceived as legitimate targets, such as, for instance in the areal bombings of the Second World

¹⁵ See also Ebba D Drolshagen, *Wehrmachtskinder. Auf der Suche nach dem nie gekannten Vater* (München: Droemer Knaur Verlag, 2005).

¹⁶ Kai Grieg, *The War Children of the World, War and Children Identity Project* (WCIP) (Bergen, 2001).

War, but psychological warfare aimed at breaking the morale of the enemy has increasingly involved sexual warfare, i.e. using sexual violence (mainly against women and children) as a targeted war strategy. As a result, sexual violence during armed conflicts and children born of war are no longer mainly an undesired by-product of warfare but they are used as a tactical and strategic weapon within the conflict itself. A third reason which has played a part in greater interest in the fate of children born of war is an increased awareness of children as a distinct group with well-defined rights. Following the codification of human rights in general¹⁷ on the one hand and humanitarian law of war on the other hand,¹⁸ the last few decades have also seen the rights of children recognised and enshrined in international through the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC).¹⁹ The CRC clarifies the rights of children and makes them legally enforceable. This will hopefully lead to greater protection of children throughout armed conflicts, and it will affect the debates over the legal position of children born of war, whose rights are curtailed in a variety of ways. Academic research can play a significant part in raising awareness and informing political and normative debates about these issues. One example of this interplay between research and policy making is R. Charli Carpenter's book *Born of War*. Based on interdisciplinary workshops dealing with diverse aspects of the protection of children of sexual violence survivors in conflict zones, the edited collection explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, children's rights, research ethics, justice as well as investigating the situation of children of survivors of sexual violence in different conflicts ranging from Bosnia-Herzegovina, to Rwanda, from Northern Uganda to East Timor and Sierra Leone. In collaboration, practical insights can inform academic debate, and in return research results can be utilised by decision makers in a mutually fruitful process to the benefit of the disadvantaged and often vulnerable children.

4. Methodological Considerations and the Question of Sources

Children born of war are often hidden and belong to marginalised population groups. Their stigmatization is evident in the simple fact that in almost all historical and geographical contexts these children are referred to by their

¹⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 10.12.1948. <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr>>.

¹⁸ International humanitarian law, also referred to as the laws of war is the legal corpus consisting of the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions, as well as subsequent treaties, case law, and customary international law. It defines the conduct and responsibilities of nations, both belligerent and neutral, and of individuals engaged in warfare, in relation to each other and to protected persons, usually meaning civilians.

¹⁹ *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. <<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>>.

environment by using derogatory terms such as ‘Moeffenkinder’ (children of German prostitutes, Netherlands), ‘Enfants de Boches’ or ‘Fritzouilles’ (children of dishonour, France), ‘Bui doi’ (dust of life, Vietnam), ‘Devil’s Children’ (Rwanda), ‘German Kid’ (Norway/Denmark), ‘Russenkind’ (Russian brat in Austria/Germany) to name but a few. In contrast to the wealth of abusive terms, which highlight local awareness of the children who were clearly perceived as different, undesirable and in some way inferior, no term describing the group in an objective non-derogatory fashion existed until the term ‘children born of war’ was introduced by Carpenter and Mochman recently.²⁰ This indicates that while local society everywhere appears to be aware of outsiders, even if these are children, research has mainly been unaware of this particular group, despite the fact – as has been shown in the few cases addressed above – their numbers were significant.

The stigmatization, often attached to mothers of children fathered by foreign soldiers, and by implication the threat of discrimination against the children themselves meant that mothers often tried to keep secret the children’s identity, even from the children themselves. Thus, an estimation of the population size of this group is difficult. In addition, the sensitivity of the research topic implies, especially in geographical areas of ongoing conflicts, but also in the case of psychologically scarred mothers and children, that the process of acquiring knowledge has to be a cautious and well-tempered approach with well-defined ethical boundaries.²¹ This is particularly the case where the interest of the researcher to promote a better understanding of the subject may be in conflict with the mothers’ and children’s desire (or even requirement) to remain anonymous as a protection against stigmatisation and discrimination in family and society. One consequence of the potential impact of the research on the mothers and children is that methodology and data collection procedure differ depending on whether the life processes of children in past conflicts or in contemporary conflict are being analysed. Mochmann²² suggests four main types of children born of war and within these different categories sources and meth-

²⁰ R. Charli Carpenter, ed., *Protecting children born of sexual violence and exploitation in conflict zones: existing practice and knowledge gaps*, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and Ford Institute for Human Security, University of Pittsburgh, 2005. Ingvill C. Mochmann, “Consolidating the evidence base of children born of war,” *ZA-Information*, 2006 (59): 198-199.

²¹ Julie Mertus, “Key Ethical Inquiries for Future Research.” In *Born of War, Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, ed. by R. Charlie Carpenter, 180-187. (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007).

²² Ingvill C. Mochmann “Children Born of War.” In: *Juventud Embotellada. Los ritmos del cambio social*. Revista OBETS. Revista de Ciencias Sociales. N. 2 (dic. 2008). 53-61, Alicante, Universidad de Alicante. Instituto Universitario de Desarrollo Social y Paz, 2008. Ingvill C Mochmann and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, “The forgotten consequences of war: The life course of children fathered by German soldiers in Norway and Denmark during WWII – some empirical results,” *Historical Social Research* 33(1), 2008: 347.

odology will differ in some fields and others not. The four categories are: 1) children of enemy soldiers, 2) children of soldiers from occupational forces, 3) children of child soldiers and 4) children of peacekeeping forces. The first group embeds children fathered by foreign soldiers who are clearly defined as enemies in the country or region of location. This also includes children of foreign prisoners of war (POWs). In the case of the second category, i. e. children of soldiers from occupation forces the soldiers can be seen as enemies or allies, depending on the view of the local population. The allied forces occupying Germany in the post WWII years, for example, were conceived as liberators by some and as enemies by others. The third category includes children born by child soldiers such as child soldiers abducted in northern Uganda forced to serve in the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and the fourth group includes children fathered by members of peacekeeping forces for example West African peacekeeping force “Ecomog” in Liberia between 1990 and 1998 and, United Nations peacekeeping forces UNTAC in Cambodia in the 1990s.

With regard to children born by enemy and occupation forces in many European countries during the Second World War the issue was frequently raised by children themselves. Often one child would tell his/her life story, either in an autobiography, or by using other media such as newspapers, radio or television. This has frequently had a snowball effect and other children took the courage to come forward and tell their own story. Now, almost 65 years after the end of the Second World War, associations of children born of war exist in Norway, Denmark, Finland, France, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain. These organisations provide an important source for contemporary researchers, as they facilitate the identification of children born of war and provide a platform from which to reach potential participants for surveys. Moreover, the local self-help organisation often possess important knowledge about national archives other institutions with relevant information, or even individuals who may possess nation specific knowledge on the topic. Depending on the country under investigation, access to documentation varies significantly. In Norway, for example, well documented files of the about 8000 children born in the *Lebenborn* homes exist in the archives and can be accessed under certain conditions. Of particular importance to all children fathered by German soldiers during WWII are the holdings at “Deutsche Dienststelle” (WASSt) in Berlin. WASSt was established shortly before the outbreak of Second World War. It possesses card indices for almost all former members of the *Wehrmacht* and members of other military and para-military organizations. For World War Two alone this amounts to an alphabetically organized central registry with personal record cards for over 18 million former members of the German *Wehrmacht* and other military formations, 100 million individual messages about postings between units, 150 million individual messages about unit losses, and 15 million files on German and Austrian forces and their allies who were prisoners of war. Special German data protection laws concerning

research by the WAST were issued in 1993 and 1994. According to these laws any information about an individual can only be given to third parties if the individual or his/her descendants give their consent. However, the right of children born of war to find their fathers outweighs the fathers' right to personal data protection. This means that far fewer legal obstacles delay or obstruct these searches.²³ In addition, the media have been used in order to reach this population group, and sometimes also to reach the mothers. This is particularly important in cases where the children do not know about their real biological background or circumstances of conception. The release of media articles, documentaries and movies such as *Anonyma - a woman in Berlin* in 2008 and *Grbavica* in 2006 have given the topic high visibility. *Anonyma* tells the story of women raped by Red Army soldiers during the invasion of Germany in 1945 and *Grbavica* deals with the relationship between a mother and her daughter conceived in a Serb rape camp during the civil war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

In today's conflicts access to children born of war can be obtained via non-governmental organisations that are directly active in conflict situations providing humanitarian aid. Unfortunately, recent analyses among humanitarian organisations reveal they have little knowledge about the existence of the 'children born of war' as a distinct group.²⁴ This clearly proves the dilemma in such a sensitive population – mothers and children do not want to expose themselves and tell their story, the humanitarian workers are often not aware of the problem and can thus neither help the victims nor provide information about the magnitude of the group. Research, however, requires this kind of information in order to engage in the necessary studies which would in turn allow an informed debate about normative issues and – equally important – to facilitate further data collection to initiate a more in-depth comparative and interdisciplinary project to enhance our understanding of the situation of children born of war globally in all types of conflict. So far, such research has often had to rely on other source material such as archival sources and other historical primary and secondary sources, media reports, biographies and autobiographies, photographs and letters, other information from witnesses and a multitude of statistical data. While these are essential for an analysis of the phenomenon, ideally quantitative and qualitative data emanating from the children themselves should form the core of the next detailed comparative study.

²³ For further information see: <<http://www.arkivverket.no/arkivverket/bruk/person/krigsbarn.htm>> and <http://www.dd-wast.de/frame_e.htm>.

²⁴ Carpenter, 2005. The work by psychologist Katrin Groninger with children born of war in Rwanda and their mothers demonstrates clearly the impact humanitarian organisations can have in this field. See among others <<http://www.arte.tv/de/Die-Welt-verstehen/artereportage/2546718.html>>.

In summary, the data base on children born of war is still weak and with regard to a description of their life courses often does not exceed anecdotal evidence and/or autobiographies. Therefore, it is essential to obtain more qualitative and quantitative data as a basis of a comparative analysis of the situation of children born of war across time and nations generally and embed this knowledge into an interdisciplinary theoretical framework suitable for analysing the research field of children born of war independent of time and space.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

Knowledge available so far indicates that although the children born of war are different with respect to background of conception, biological origin, history and cultural contexts, many children are exposed to the same kind of difficulties. These include among others the lack of access to health facilities, education and food. Also, the social integration and non-discrimination prove difficult as the children are often treated as enemies due to their biological background. The following key issues are perceived to be essential for bringing forward the discourse on this topic.²⁵

- the need to identify sources that would enable research into the phenomenon of children born of war and occupation across Europe. This includes the attempt to find individuals and to extend surveys to these individuals by adaptation and employment of interviews such as those carried out in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands
- the need to embark on a comparative approach, investigating children's experiences in different countries of upbringing, examining policies of military authorities' responses to the phenomena of children born of war across the world.
- the need to approach the topic in an interdisciplinary way, including historical, medical, juridical, sociological, psychological and political issues
- the need to undertake qualitative and quantitative research
- the need to engage with local support groups, in which affected war children have organized themselves to address the social and psychological 'baggage' arising from their experiences as children born of war
- the need to break with the taboo that still surrounds children born of war.
- the need for definitorial clarity and the importance of employing methodologically 'robust' oral history techniques when interviewing 'witnesses'

²⁵ These issues were discussed at the workshop "Children born of War during and after the Second World War" at the Centre for Second World War Studies at the Department of Modern History at the University of Birmingham, UK, in June 2008. This workshop formed the basis of the papers published in this Focus.

- the need to analyse children born of war in relation to other exposed societal groups of children such as orphans, adopted children, children of non-local origins, mixed-race children to name but a few such groups.

In this process it is essential to take into account the military. This topic needs to be addressed and taken seriously by defence departments, national and international forces and military research academies.²⁶

Studies on children born of war summarised above confirm earlier provisional findings and also reinforce research results previously published about children born of war in Uganda²⁷, Bosnia,²⁸ and Norway²⁹. In many of the case studies, a large number of children were deprived of human rights which have by now been enshrined in international law. These rights have been formalised in Human Rights legislation over the years, because they are universally agreed to be the basic standards without which people cannot survive and develop in dignity. As such they are inherent to all human beings, whatever their nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. They are inalienable and universal. The common standard on human rights, set with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, provided the framework within which various binding international treaties have been developed. Among the six core human rights treaties is also the Convention on the Rights of the Child³⁰, an international convention setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children.

²⁶ The United Nations have made an important step in this direction by accepting the resolution 'United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel' A/RES/62/214, 21 December 2007.

²⁷ Eunice Apio, "Uganda's Forgotten Children of War," in *Born of War. Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, ed. by R. Charlie Carpenter (Bloomfield. Kumarian Press, 2007), 94-109.

²⁸ The legacy of wartime rape in Bosnia, <<http://www.humanrights-geneva.info/The-legacy-of-wartime-rape-in,2781>>. Weitsman, Patricia, "Women, War, and Identity: Policies of Mass Rape in Bosnia and Rwanda" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Town & Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California, USA, Mar 22, 2006).
<http://www.allacademic.com/one/www/research/index.php?cmd=www_search&offset=0&limit=5&multi_search_search_mode=publication&multi_search_publication_fulltext_mod=fulltext&textfield_submit=true&search_module=multi_search&search=Search&search_field=title_idx&fulltext_search=%3Cb%3EWomen%2C+War%2C+and+Identity%3A+Policies+of+Mass+Rape+in+Bosnia+and+Rwanda%3C%2Fb%3E&PHPSESSID=6a0074d00d909b89c8ef5a0a605af8cd>

²⁹ Borgersrud 2004, Ellingsen 2004, Ericsson and Simonsen 2005.

³⁰ The other treaties are: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In force since 1990, this treaty has been ratified by 193 countries³¹ and serves as a yardstick for evaluating children's rights globally. Among the rights enshrined in the CRC are

- The right to life
- The right from birth to a name, to acquire a nationality and the right to be cared for by his parents
- The right to preservation of his/her identity
- The right to maintain personal relations with both parents (except where this is contrary to the best interest of the child)
- The right of protection from all forms of abuse
- The right to the highest attainable standard of health care
- The right to education
- The right to non-discrimination

Many of these rights are affected when children are born to local mothers and foreign soldiers. As discussed above in countries under German occupation during the Second World War, *Wehrmachtskinder* were viewed as children of the enemy, and alongside their mothers suffered discrimination and stigmatization. While all the children were given names at birth, and while few ended up without nationality, examples demonstrate how national governments – without consideration of the welfare of the children – were content to prevent them from acquiring the nationality, simply by virtue of having the 'wrong father'. Similarly, in the case of children of Soviet and American occupation soldiers in Germany and Austria, the military governments' refusal to accept any responsibility for the welfare of children fathered by their soldiers, affected the children's rights to their father's nationality. Even more so, it had an impact on the children's welfare by excluding them from paternal care. Not only did the policy of moving the fathers away from the occupied countries deprive the children of their right to maintain personal relations with both parents and to be cared for by both parents, it also had a significant influence on the material wellbeing of the mother and – by implication – of the child. The inability of the mothers to provide for their children in material terms often forced them to give up the children for adoption or leave them to be cared for in homes or with foster parents. Furthermore, the fact that many children did not learn about their fathers' (and in some cases also mothers') identity caused serious identity crises which, in many cases, resulted in significant psychological and psychosomatic problems in later life.

The case studies individually and as a whole confirm that the combination of factors affecting the life courses of the majority of children born of war and occupation has a serious impact on the well being of those children of foreign soldiers and local mothers. This also affects the second generation – the grand-

³¹ As of December 2008.

children of the soldiers – who often grow up with a traumatised child born of war as parent and where the wall of silence is passed on to the next generation.

Awareness of the fact that children born of war are more likely to be exposed to certain violations of their rights than other children can help improve their situation in future through enforcement of normative measures and education. With increasing interest in the topic, also in academia, but not exclusively so, it is hoped that improvement in data and information about the children and their life chances and life courses both in past and present wars and conflicts will contribute to our understanding which human rights are the most essential seen through the eyes of the child. Hence, this topic has significant future research potential going beyond the children born during and after WWII.

6. HSR-FOCUS: Editorial Remarks

This HSR FOCUS is a result of a workshop held in June 2008 on “Children born of war during and after Second World War” at the Centre for Second World War Studies at the Department of Modern History at the University of Birmingham. This centre hosts a research network on “Children born of War during and after the Second World War” (<http://www.secondworldwar.bham.ac.uk/children.htm>). The aim of this network is to gain a better understanding of the social, psychological, economic and political factors affecting children born of the Second World War within the context of war-time and post-war European developments. This is to be achieved by analysing the policies of the different military and civilian authorities vis-à-vis these children and their mothers and fathers on the one hand, and by collecting and studying data about the war-time and post-war short and medium term effects of the specific circumstances of children born of war and their mothers on the other. This network closely cooperates with the global “International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children Born of War” hosted by GESIS- Leibniz Institute for the Social Science in Cologne (<http://www.childrenbornofwar.org>).

At the Birmingham workshop case studies from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Germany were presented. In addition, presentations were given on the methodological approach to this particular research field and the different sources relevant to research on children born of war were discussed. The importance of the Berlin “Deutsche Dienststelle” (WASSt) was emphasised. WASSt holds original documents of the former German Wehrmacht and other military/para-military organisations in WWII and thus offers a significant source for children fathered by German soldiers in all occupied territories. The presentations made clear that knowledge about children born of war within the societies they grew up in differed significantly for the different countries under scrutiny, although they all originated from the same war. In some instances the investigations were based on anecdotal evidence than profound research such as for example in the case of Belgium

where a research project has only recently begun. Norway represents the other side of the 'continuum of knowledge' where during the past 25 years a wealth of information has become available on the life courses and destinies of children fathered by German soldiers during the occupation of Norway. Yet, it is likely that even in this case much information is still unknown and sources uncovered. One similarity for all countries represented at the workshop is that the sources include a wide range of material from photos, movies, personal, published and archival documents, contemporary witness accounts, letters, official registries and biographies to qualitative and quantitative interviews. Despite this wealth, the material is sketchy and has been and will continue to be complemented by secondary sources, utilising historical, political, military, medical, sociological and other evidence.

Regardless of the dimension and social impact of the tens of thousands of children born of war, this topic has so far found little attention in academia, particularly when compared to other aspects of WWII research. Even in German speaking countries with their greater exposure the phenomenon of children born of war, the interest in the topic has been limited. Hundreds of thousand of soldiers were serving in the Wehrmacht all over Europe during WWII and in the post-war decade American, British Soviet and French troops were occupying Germany and Austria. As a result the German dimension of this topic is significant. In order to make the contributions accessible to the broader German speaking audience, who may again be important knowledge providers, the contributions in this HSR FOCUS are in German except for a summary article on children born of war during the Second World War and beyond. Two articles examine the situation of the children fathered by German soldiers and local women in occupied territories, in Denmark and the Netherlands. The other two articles analyse the situation of children fathered by American soldiers and local women in Germany and Britain and children of Soviet soldiers and local women in Germany and Austria.

The authors were asked, as far as information was available for their respective geographical area of research, to follow the same structure regarding content and layout of their articles.

- 1) *Background information.* Which war or conflict is it? Who was stationed where, why and for how long? How many soldiers were there? Was there a resistance movement? What was the situation of the soldiers in the country of occupation/placement? How were they perceived by the public and what was the contact to the civilian population like?
- 2) *Situation of local woman and mother.* How were relationships between local women and the soldiers perceived? How were the women who had dated foreign soldiers treated during/after the occupation? How many relationships existed? What is known about rapes and pregnancies? What was the situation of pregnant women and the situation of mothers of children fathered by the soldiers?

- 3) *Children born of war*. Where do the sources on the existence of these children come from? Where did the children grow up? What did they know about their biological origin, when and how did they learn about it? What do we know about their childhood and adolescence? What do we know about objective issues such as health, education, citizenship rights? Have they found their father (and mother)? Have they met their biological parents? How important is the question of identity for them? What is their relationship to their home country like?

All the cases presented here provide information on these issues, although based on very different sources and different levels of information in the respective parts. Still, the patterns of similarities and differences are clearly recognisable and reveal how systematic and comparative analysis may improve our knowledge base about this group – knowledge which may be valuable for children born of war in present and future wars and conflicts.

It is our hope that this HSR FOCUS will encourage research on ‘white’ and ‘blind’ spots in the research field of children born of war during and after World War II and that it will encourage international and interdisciplinary collaborative projects on the topic. Furthermore, we look forward in anticipation to national and international funding agencies recognising the importance and significance of this topic.

Finally, we would like to thank the School of History and Cultures at the University of Birmingham and in particular the Centre for Second World War Studies for part-funding and hosting the original workshop. Furthermore, we would like to thank HSR for the opportunity to publish the workshop’s findings in this HSR FOCUS.

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